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Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, July 5, 2007

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07/03/2007

Sanilac Drug Task Force seizes drugs and firearms

TRACI L. WEISENBACH , The Huron Daily Tribune

DELAWARE TOWNSHIP — Sanilac Drug Task Force investigators executed a search warrant June 27 at a home in Delaware Township, seizing 138 marijuana plants, suspected cocaine, processed marijuana, prescription narcotics, two firearms, scales and marijuana manufacturing paraphernalia.

According to a press release, the home was located on the 7000 block of Maplegrove Road. Three children have been removed from the home pending further investigation.

At the beginning of the 2007 marijuana growing season, Task Force investigators resumed their investigative efforts on a second set of Delaware Township suspects. Intermittent surveillance was conducted on the suspects' property, and in early June, investigators located marijuana plants growing in two areas of the suspects' property. When investigators executed the search warrant, the 138 marijuana plants were seized from their growing locations in a garden and in a boat stored on the property and near the entrance to the home. Drug paraphernalia and a rifle were found in a car parked in the driveway of the home while a loaded shotgun was located near the entry door of the home. Marijuana growing paraphernalia was found throughout the property and home. Other items also were located in the home.

The Delaware Township man, 34, and 30-year-old woman who live on the property were interviewed and released by investigators pending the results of crime laboratory analysis.

Based upon the presence of three children, ages 7, 11, and 12 living in the home, the criminal drug activity carried on in their presence, the loaded shotgun accessible in the home, the overall conditions in the home and suspected child pornographic materials located in the home, the Michigan Department of Human Services was contacted and the children removed from the premises. An investigation into the welfare of the couple's three

children and potential neglect/abuse charges is being pursued. Once crime laboratory analysis is received, Drug Task Force investigators will submit requests to the prosecutor's office charging both subjects with the following: manufacture marijuana more than 20/less than 200 plants (a seven-year felony), possession of cocaine (a felony), possession of firearms in commission of a felony (a felony, mandatory two-year non-concurrent minimum), maintain drug house (two-year high misdemeanor), possession controlled substance analogue (felony or misdemeanor based upon analysis results) and possession of marijuana (misdemeanor).

Task Force investigators were assisted in this investigation by the Sanilac Sheriff Road Patrol, Michigan State Police, and the Deckerville Police Department.

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Article published Jul 5, 2007

Photos lead to child sexual abuse charges

By Matt Jachman
STAFF WRITER

A registered Redford Township sex offender has been charged with child sexual abuse over pictures of a 7-year-old Detroit girl found on a camera at his home.

Kenneth E. Stefanski, 36, was arraigned Monday on two counts of child sexually abusive activity. Judge Charlotte Wirth entered a not-guilty plea for him and set bond at \$150,000. A preliminary hearing was scheduled for Tuesday, July 10.

Stefanski's entry on the registry of sex offenders shows he was previously convicted of second-degree criminal sexual conduct.

He is also accused of molesting a Garden City girl, a charge that led to a \$1 million bond in Garden City. Police are continuing an investigation, and Stefanski was in custody.

The Redford charges stem from an incident Thursday on the grounds of St. Robert Bellarmine Catholic Church on West Chicago and Inkster Road.

During a picnic there, Capt. Kraig Brueck said, the 7-year-old girl was playing with another girl when a man gestured for them to come to him.

The man took pictures of the girls, Brueck said, and at one point pulled down the 7-year-old's skirt and underwear and took more pictures.

The man left; the girls, meanwhile, told their parents what had happened, and police were called, Brueck said.

Stefanski was arrested Friday, after Garden City police executed a search warrant at his apartment, police said. A camera was found at the apartment that contained pictures of the Detroit girl, Brueck said.

Stefanski was not home when the officers got there, but arrived during the search and was arrested, Brueck said.

mjachman@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2115

Oceana's Herald-Journal

Posted: 7-5-2007

Mud Bog to benefit Andre' Bosse Centers

Who doesn't like to play in the mud? Saturday, July 14 at 11 a.m. until dark, trucks, Jeeps and spectators are encouraged to join the mess at the first Mud Bog to benefit the Andre' Bosse Centers, local child advocacy centers.

The event will be a quarter mile off North Stiles at 2936 W. Beyer Rd. in Mason County. First place winners will be awarded trophies in three classes.

There is a \$15 registration fee per participant. Spectator cost is an \$8 for adults and \$5 for kids under 12.

Concessions will be available on-site. For additional information call the Andre' Bosse Centers at 845-0506 or 873-1707 or visit us on the Web at www.andrebossecenter.org.

The Andre' Bosse Center, founded in 1998 and based in Oceana County, is a multi-county rural Child Advocacy Center that offers programs and services in Oceana, Mason, Newaygo and Lake counties. As the Andre' Bosse Centers grew and needs arose in the community, new programs, services and an additional center in Mason County were added. The mission of the Andre' Bosse Centers is to help agencies that help kids. Because only together can we hope to prevent, treat and eliminate child abuse in our community. In addition to serving as an advocate for children, the Andre' Bosse Centers operate Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program in Oceana and Newaygo counties, supervised visitation, forensic interviewing and Kidsafe prevention programs. For more information go online to andrebossecenter.org or call 231-873-1707.

Voice Your Opinion

Date published: 7-5-2007

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Leaving the foster system

Published June 28, 2007
by CRAIG TRUDELL

Lansing — Three years ago, William Daniel's younger brother escaped a cracking belt and beating at the hands of his mother long enough to call 911.

At 11 years old, Daniel watched as police handcuffed his mother and drove her away in the back of a police car.

"They saw from the bruises, scars and marks on my brother's face and back that the situation we were living in was unhealthy," Daniel said.

Daniel and his brother became two of more than half a million children in the country living in foster care. For youths like Daniel and his brother, as well as adults who have outgrown the foster care system, the Department of Human Services (DHS) launched a new Foster Youth in Transition Web site.

Services and support on major issues facing foster youth, including education, employment, housing and health, can be found at www.michigan.gov/fyit.

Daniel will be able to turn to the new Web site when moving out of his parent's house becomes a priority and when attending college becomes a concern. He says MSU's Air Force ROTC program is his first choice.

While he isn't old enough to get his driver's license, the Air Force Junior ROTC member hopes to get in the driver's seat of a jet and become a fighter pilot after college.

The home of his foster parents is four blocks away from the house he grew up in - the one his mother formerly owned. The site of the house brings about mixed memories for Daniel.

"I still pass by the house every day and just stand there sometimes," he said. "We had pretty good times, and we had bad times. But I'm in a foster home where I'm being loved and cared for. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

However, when Daniel turns 18, he will leave foster care, or "age out." In 2006, 536 former foster youth aged out of care in Michigan, where research shows they are at a greater risk for poverty, homelessness, unemployment and other negative outcomes.

A statewide task force formed to stop this trend suggested in 2006 that DHS construct a Web site. More than 100 members of public and private organizations contributed throughout the last nine months in creating it, including youth representatives from state foster care organizations.

"This Web site was developed with youth input, down to the colors (of the font)," DHS representative Kate Hanley said.

"It will be helpful to many other youths in this state when they're looking for services, not just foster youth, but that's what we've focused on."

Input about what information youth would be looking for came from Jillian Jones, a Traverse City high school student who spoke at the unveiling of the Web site Wednesday in Lansing.

"What's most helpful about the Web site is that it's 24/7," she said. "The DHS office is only open from 9-5 p.m. With this, you can get on at 3 a.m. and get the information you need."

Representing the Wayne County board of the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative as president, Daniel also attended the unveiling. He enjoys talking with foster youths at his high school and other MYOI members about how to deal with their similar situations.

"I tell them although they're going through trials and tribulations, they can't let it affect their ability to learn and grow," he said.

MYOI consists of 90 youth boards in 30 counties across Michigan, coordinator Shannon Brower said. The fact that the state put together the Web site in the midst of what she called "serious budget challenges" impressed Brower.

"DHS has continued to recognize that, regardless of what funds are available, the need is still there," she said.

<http://www.statenews.com/article.phtml?pk=41503>



Former foster kids need help

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, July 05, 2007

By Alberta Anderson

Journal Reader

As a society, we have failed young people "aging out" of foster care.

Each year, approximately 20,000 of the 545,000 children in foster care nationwide are discharged to live on their own and fend for themselves. We were the parents of these youth while they were in foster care, and we need to see the job all the way. Having reached the age of majority, they are assumed to be productive, self-reliant and self-sufficient.

We do not have these high expectations of adolescents who grow up under the best of circumstances. Why do we expect that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged youth make the transition alone without any support? Studies of youth who have left foster care suggest that they are more likely than those in the general population to not finish high school, be unemployed and be dependent on public assistance. Many end up in prison, on drugs, homeless, or parents at an early age.

State Rep. Brenda J. Clack, D-Flint, has sponsored House Bill No. 4481 to provide services to youth transitioning out of foster care. The bill would require the Department of Human Services to establish a program that would offer education, training and financial support for young adults (age 14-20) who have been in foster care based on child abuse or neglect on or after his or her 14th birthday.

To make a successful transition from foster care to adulthood and independence, young people need adequate preparation, support and guidance before, during and after discharge from the system. They need career counseling and job development, health and mental health, housing support, mentoring and practical life skills training.

If we do not focus attention and resources on this community of young people at this crucial moment in their lives, we will continue to incur exponentially greater costs in the form of wasted potential, welfare dependency, homelessness, child abuse, delinquency and numerous devastating expenses.

Alberta Anderson

Flint

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Article published Jul 4, 2007
Man sought in accident turns self in
Driver booked on child support charges; more could come later

By MOLLY MONTAG
Times Herald

The man driving the car involved in a fatal hit-and-run accident Sunday night in Port Huron turned himself in to police Tuesday.

Police said Jeremy Michael Swanson, 26, was arrested on an outstanding warrant for failure to pay child support. He has been booked in the St. Clair County jail and is expected to be arraigned on the child support charge Thursday.

It's unknown what kind of charges Swanson and an 18-year-old passenger in his car may face for the Sunday accident. Port Huron police Lt. Jim Jones would say only that the case will be discussed with prosecutors in the next few days.

Further details about the case have not been released.

"We're continuing the investigation," Jones said.

Police said Swanson, who has a history of traffic violations, turned himself in to police at the encouragement of family and friends. He had been wanted since he ran from the scene of the accident about 7 p.m.

Police said Swanson hit Orman William Beaumont, 67, as Beaumont was crossing Griswold Street at 17th Street in his motorized wheelchair. Beaumont died at 12:55 a.m. Monday at a University of Michigan Health Systems hospital in Ann Arbor.

ClickOnDetroit.com

Man Sentenced To Life For Daycare Shootings

POSTED: 11:44 am EDT July 5, 2007

DETROIT -- A man convicted of fatally shooting two people and wounding three others during a shooting spree that began outside day care that his daughter attended was sentenced Thursday to life in prison without parole.

Contrelle Harbin, 26, of Detroit, was convicted last month of two counts of murder, three counts of assault and firearms charges. Life in prison without parole is the mandatory term for the murder convictions.

Police initially thought the shootings were random. But Harbin's lawyer confirmed he had a daughter at the day care. Testimony showed that Harbin knew at least two of the victims.

The shootings took place within 10-minutes in a three- to four-block area on Nov. 16. No motive was given.

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Old school could become a home for the homeless

By JULIE SWIDWA
H-P Staff Writer

BENTON HARBOR — Studies have shown that the first step in getting chronically homeless people on the right track is providing them with a decent place to live. Then the problems that led to homelessness can be addressed.

That is the premise behind a plan to turn the old Columbus School building into permanent supportive housing for people who have been chronically homeless.

Tony McGhee, vice president of physical development for Cornerstone Alliance, one of the partners in the project, said renovation work on the old building at 815 Columbus Ave. could start later this summer.

McGhee said that though the building will be used to help people who have been chronically homeless, it is not a homeless shelter.

“This will provide people with a permanent residence that they can afford, that is stable, and that comes with supportive agencies,” he said. “I think overall the community will be supportive. This will be quality, affordable housing.”



THE OLD COLUMBUS SCHOOL at 815 Columbus Ave. in Benton Harbor would be renovated into eight apartments for the chronically homeless under a plan proposed by Cornerstone Alliance and Emergency Shelter Services of Benton Harbor.

John Madill / H-P staff

Money is in place for the project, but it needs approval of the city Planning

Commission and City Commission because it requires a special use permit. The property is zoned singlefamily residential, and the proposal calls for multi-family housing. A public hearing is set for 1 p.m. July 24.

The Columbus School building is owned by a partnership consisting of Benton Harbor Nonprofit Housing Development Corp., Trinity Village Nonprofit Housing Corp. – with headquarters in Muskegon – and Great Lakes Capital Funding for Housing in Lansing.

Partners in the renovation are Cornerstone Alliance and Emergency Shelter Services in Benton Harbor. McGhee said the two partners are leasing the building from the owners for \$1 a year for 100 years.

Money for the renovation is coming from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Last year, MSHDA awarded \$10 million in combined federal and state dollars to eight communities to provide housing for some of the chronically homeless people. Benton Harbor got \$1 million. At that time, Alysia Babcock, executive director of Emergency Shelter Services, said the city would use its money to renovate the old Columbus School. She said in addition to helping chronically homeless people on the path to stability, it would ease some of the crowding at Emergency Shelter Services.

McGhee said the school building has four classrooms on each of two floors, and that each classroom will become a 1,000square-foot apartment. There also will be an office on site for supportive service agencies like Michigan Works!, Community Mental Health and the Family Independence Agency. “Study after study has shown that if you can get someone in permanent, supportive housing, the cost on the community is much less,” McGhee said. He also predicted that the renovation of Columbus School will boost property values in a neighborhood that has seen its share of blight.

A chronically homeless person is defined as one who has a disability and has been continuously homeless for more than a year, or homeless three times in four years. The person also must be unaccompanied, meaning he or she has no spouse or children.

Tax credit for donating food is a worthy idea

Web-posted Jul 4, 2007

OAKLAND PRESS EDITORIAL

As we celebrate the Fourth of July Holiday today with cookouts and festive meals with bountiful food, let's not forget those who are not as fortunate as most when it comes to having full food pantries.

This year, more than one million Michigan residents - about one in 10 - will use a food bank to help feed their families.

Michigan's struggling economy is hard on everyone in the state, but for the working poor and unemployed who have exhausted their benefits, it's a struggle for daily survival.

When unemployment strikes, it hurts the working poor and unemployed even more because those who would donate to food banks no longer have the means to do so as they grapple with their personal situations.

A state senator believes that offering Michigan residents tax credits for donations to food banks could spur giving that would help state families that need assistance.

The bill makes sense and should become law as quickly as possible.

Michigan residents can claim tax credits for clothing, furniture, appliances and vehicle donations to charitable organizations such as the Salvation Army, the Purple Heart or the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Taxpayers can also receive a credit of up to \$100 - \$200 for married couples filing jointly - for cash contributions to shelters, kitchens and food banks.

However, under current state law, donations of food items to food banks do not receive the same benefit.

Food donations should receive the same credit as cash donations.

Senate Bill 150, introduced by Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City, would extend the tax breaks to those who donate food to such organizations.

Allen introduced his bill in 2006, but the year ended before the Legislature could act upon it.

He reintroduced his proposal in January, but while Michigan families continue to suffer, it has been lingering in the Senate Committee on Finance ever since.

Allen says he believes his bill could increase donations to food banks.

While there is no guarantee that will occur, the tax credit bill won't cause any harm if donations do pick up because of the legislation.

But we won't know that if the committee doesn't get the bill to the Senate floor for a vote.

According to an Associated Press article, about 1.9 million Michigan residents receive government food assistance.

That number is the highest in the 40-year history of the federal food stamp program in the state.

The number of people in Michigan receiving such assistance is higher than all other states but five.

As dire as those numbers appear, officials estimate that there may be more than 300,000 Michigan residents who need food assistance but don't realize they qualify for the aid.

For the sake of Michigan's struggling families, Oakland County's five senators must lobby to get Allen's bill to a floor vote immediately.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

The high cost of success Increased need amid dwindling resources dooms HelpSource

Thursday, July 05, 2007

BY SUSAN L. OPPAT

News Staff Reporter

When its founders established HelpSource, the largest nongovernmental social agency in Washtenaw County, they believed they were mapping a path to success.

HelpSource was born in 1996 with the merger of Huron Services for Youth and Child & Family Services. Its purpose was to serve as an umbrella organization for a variety of programs, from substance abuse counseling to foster family management.

In its earliest years, HelpSource was a charitable success story, serving thousands of clients and employing 400 workers with an annual budget of \$11 million.

But by last month, when HelpSource announced plans to close its doors by Sept. 30, the social agency had shrunk to 122 employees and a \$4 million budget serving about 600 clients.

Current HelpSource officials say the path leading to the agency's closure can be traced to several factors that include dwindling revenue, increased overhead costs and a too-broad mission.

Ingrid Sheldon, a HelpSource board member, said the agency's founding members may not have realized what current board members now know.

"The more of a success you are, the more it costs," Sheldon said.

For several years, HelpSource has been battling two opposing forces: More demand with an increasing client base against shrinking revenue sources, Sheldon said.

HelpSource revenue took a significant hit weeks before the closure was announced when Washtenaw United Way said it would cut the agency's allocation 25 percent, from \$415,287 to \$311,422. HelpSource was given more United Way money than any other agency.

In addition, its most recent fundraising campaign set a goal of \$700,000 - and brought in \$200,000.

HelpSource treasurer Kevin Flattery said he believes the fundraising challenges resulted from the structure of HelpSource as an umbrella agency for different programs.

"I had no idea when I joined the board what HelpSource did," Flattery said. "We never were able to brand correctly."

HelpSource programs in Washtenaw and western Wayne counties include:

- Four residential houses for abused and neglected youth.
- Foster family management.
- Adoption management.

- Day care for seniors with dementia and memory loss.
- Services for pregnant teenagers.
- CLEAR House and Spectrum substance abuse counseling.
- Supervision of custody exchanges between parents.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters, which is the only HelpSource program that will strike out on its own after the closure.

HelpSource has pledged to help its clients find other programs. Executive Director Susan Crabb said that promise is now made easier with the recent confirmation that United Way funding earmarked for HelpSource programs in the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 will follow the clients as they move into substitute programs.

Crabb said the nonprofits that are absorbing the clients will also take on many of the HelpSource staff.

Despite that positive news, HelpSource's planned closure has sent waves of concern through other area nonprofit organizations, many with similar precarious financial positions, officials said.

HelpSource was considered one of the more stable social agencies because of its size and roots dating back 90 years to the Children's Aid Society.

But Bob Miller, who oversaw the 1996 merger and ran HelpSource until 2004, said the agency didn't have a single, easily explainable mission.

It was created with a broad range of programs that would benefit from the cost efficiencies of a single administration, he said. With that broad-brush approach came challenges in finding and managing many different funding streams with varying qualification requirements, Miller said.

Each program, Flattery said, was expected to cover a portion of the general overhead.

That system worked for a while, with one program - usually the state-funded residential program for abused and neglected children - temporarily covering some costs for the others, Flattery said.

But when funding began to shrink, the remaining funding sources wanted all the money they provided to go directly to services. That was impossible because of HelpSource's fixed overhead, which includes mortgages on its headquarters on Packard Road in Ann Arbor and on the residential houses, as well as staff costs.

In recent years, HelpSource staff was cut nearly 75 percent - until they simply couldn't cut any more, Flattery said.

"We were stretching people very thin," Flattery said. "There were a number of tired people this year who couldn't give any more than they already had."

Flattery also said changing the organization to cut some programs or clients and keep others wasn't a viable option because of the agency's overhead.

"It boiled down to the fact that our residential program was struggling, and that was our cash cow," he said.

The residential program suffered in recent years because the state hasn't placed as many abused children into residential treatment and has paid less on those contracts, Flattery said. HelpSource owns four houses for the program that require a 92 percent occupancy rate to break even - but the actual occupancy has been around 70 percent, Flattery said.

In recent years, HelpSource had already sold four other houses and assets to create cash flow. The remaining homes will be sold in an effort to break even when the agency closes, Crabb said.

Closing now, Flattery said, provides enough time to place clients in other programs. That means, "the community will be served - just with an agency that isn't called HelpSource," Flattery said.

Susan Oppat can be reached at soppat@annarbornews.com or at 734-482-1166.

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Rise in Child Chronic Illness Could Swamp Health Care

By E.J. Mundell, *HealthDay Reporter*

TUESDAY, June 26 (HealthDay News) -- As more American children eat poorly and exercise less, rates of chronic illness such as asthma and diabetes are continuing to rise, researchers are reporting.

And because childhood illness often sets the stage for adult health woes, the U.S. health-care system could be headed toward a crisis in coming decades, experts warn in a number of reports in the June 27 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

"A chronic condition in a child will become a chronic condition in an adult -- we just know that. And what you're talking about for an adult is maybe 10, 20 years of suffering. But with a child, you're talking about maybe 50, 60 years of suffering," said the journal's editor-in-chief, pediatrician Dr. Catherine DeAngelis, during a Tuesday teleconference.

A surge in childhood illness will also have a big impact on the U.S. health-care system, another expert said.

"Given these high rates of [ill children] in the next decade, there are going to be tremendously higher rates of expenditures for health care and social welfare, because a lot of these people will have health disabilities, and they won't be employable," Dr. James Perrin, director of the Center for Child and Adolescent Health Policy at MassGeneral Hospital for Children, in Boston, told *HealthDay*. Perrin is also co-author of a journal analysis of the prevalence and causes of childhood chronic illness.

The special themed issue of *JAMA* is devoted to chronic childhood illness, defined as any debilitating illness that lasts a year or more past diagnosis. A number of new studies suggest that, in many ways, the health of America's children is getting worse, not better.

Some findings:

- According to the analysis by Perrin and colleagues, more than 7 percent of U.S. children and youth were hampered in their daily activities by an illness that lasted three months or longer in 2004, compared to just 1.8 percent of children in 1960.
- Chronic conditions now affect 15 percent to 18 percent of children and teens, and even those estimates may not fully account for obesity and mental health woes, the Harvard team said.
- The "big three" chronic health conditions for kids are obesity, which affected 5 percent of American children in the early 1970s but 18 percent of children today; asthma (9 percent prevalence, nearly double from the 1980s), and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (a dramatic rise, mostly linked to better diagnosis).

Childhood diabetes is one of the prime results of rising obesity rates, which in turn result from more sedentary behaviors and poor diets.

"Children's environments have really changed a lot in the last 30 to 40 years," said Perrin. "By that, we mean a big change in their diets -- much more fast-food, high-calorie foods -- and major changes in their use of electronic media, especially television. They are spending much more time in the home watching television and eating high-calorie foods while they do so."

However, new research finds that the rise in childhood diabetes is still largely attributed to an increase in type 1 disease -- usually thought of as an inherited illness -- rather than an increase in obesity-linked type 2 disease, the form that typically strikes obese adults.

Experts aren't sure why type 1 diabetes numbers might be rising. Some experts believe that

obesity might help spur certain immune-cell changes that are seen in type 1 disease, changes that eventually lead to the destruction of insulin-producing cells in the pancreas. Or, as Dr. Rebecca Lipton of the University of Chicago noted in an editorial, many of these type 1 cases may be type 2 cases misdiagnosed by physicians.

Diabetes does seem to be affecting different groups of American children in different ways, however.

"We have seen an increase in type 1 diabetes over a 27-year period of about 60 percent. This translates into 2.7 percent higher annual rates for non-Hispanic white children and about 1.6 percent higher annual rates for Hispanics," said Dr. Dana Dabelea, of the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, and lead author of the country-wide SEARCH for Diabetes in Youth study group.

"Based on these data, we estimate that 15,000 youth are diagnosed annually with type 1 diabetes in the United States," she said.

As for type 2 diabetes, Dabelea said that form of the disease "accounts for 1 to 2 percent of cases in Caucasian children [in Europe], whereas here in the United States, this figure is 15 percent. That figure speaks for itself... It's a deleterious consequence of obesity in this country."

In their journal study, the researchers at University of Colorado Health Sciences Center found that non-Hispanic white children are more likely to develop type 1 diabetes than minority children. On the other hand, type 2 disease is much more likely to appear in black or Hispanic 15- to 19-year-olds than in white teens.

Asthma, too, is affecting more and more children, and childhoods spent largely indoors may be to blame here, as well, said Perrin, who is also a professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School.

While allergies to cockroaches and dust mites have long been linked to soaring asthma rates among America's urban poor, studies have shown no concurrent rise in the rate of household infestations over the past decades, he pointed out.

"However, we do know that kids now spend much more time indoors [than they used to] in intimate contact with cockroaches and dust mites," Perrin said.

Even the good news on childhood illness comes mixed with a little bad news. Dutch researchers note that more and more children are claiming victory over a wide variety of cancers. However, the study also suggests that battling cancer in childhood boosts risks for adult illnesses.

The study of almost 1,400 five-year survivors of childhood cancer tracked these young people to an average of just over 24 years of age. Three-quarters of these survivors experienced some form of adverse medical event in young adulthood, and one-quarter suffered five or more such events, the researchers found. More than one-third (36.8 percent) developed a life-threatening or disabling disorder years after beating their cancer, the researchers found.

Study author Dr. Huib Caron, of Emma Children's Hospital/Academic Medical Center, in Amsterdam, strongly supports the creation of specialized follow-up clinics that could monitor childhood cancer survivors into adulthood.

These clinics are essential because "the majority of adult medicine physicians haven't got the faintest clue about the health risks that this population is running -- they haven't got the expertise," Caron said. And many problems, such as cardiac troubles, are asymptomatic and would only show up on doctor-ordered ultrasounds or other tests, he said.

Getting doctors to keep closer tabs on childhood cancer survivors might not be so difficult. However, changing the poor eating habits and lax exercise patterns of America's children -- and their parents -- will be a *lot* tougher, Perrin said.

Recent public policy moves -- such as bans on sugary or greasy snacks and soft drinks in schools -- are steps in the right direction. But parents, especially, "are critical to this effort," Perrin said.

By modeling good behaviors and closely monitoring their children's behaviors, "parents can do a really good job, and it's important for them to realize that," he said. "We think that improving how parents parent is a critical way of stemming this epidemic."

More information

Find out more on keeping kids healthy at the [American Heart Association](#).

SOURCES: James Perrin, M.D., director, Center for Child and Adolescent Health Policy, MassGeneral Hospital for Children, and professor, pediatrics, Harvard School of Public Health, Boston; June 26, 2007, news teleconference with Catherine DeAngelis, M.D., editor in chief, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Boston; Dana Dabelea, M.D., Ph.D., University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Denver; Huib Caron M.D., Ph.D., Emma Children's Hospital/Academic Medical Center, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; June 27, 2007, *Journal of the American Medical Association*

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A mother fights on over prison care

July 5, 2007

BY JEFF GERRITT

FREE PRESS EDITORIAL COLUMNIST

I wouldn't wish the last year of Theresa Vaughn's life on anyone. But I would like Gov. Jennifer Granholm, state legislators and the people running the Department of Corrections to feel a moment of her pain. Maybe they would feel some urgency to fix the prison health care system that killed her 21-year-old son, Timothy Joe Souders.

Souders, a mentally ill inmate serving one to four years for shoplifting, died of heat and thirst last August at a state prison in Jackson, after spending most of his last four days strapped down in a hot cell, naked and soaked in his own urine.

Two weeks later, his mother found out how he died by reading a story I wrote in the Detroit Free Press. Souders' death was later the subject of a segment on "60 Minutes," which the television news program is scheduled to rebroadcast two weeks from Sunday.

Vaughn's troubles didn't end with her son's death. A week after she learned how he died, Vaughn's 63-year-old father, a Vietnam veteran, succumbed to cancer related to Agent Orange. In January, Vaughn's 61-year-old mother died of congestive lung failure.

Since her son's death, Vaughn, 41, a former factory worker, has been employed off and on in a restaurant and bar while struggling to get medical care for her 20-year-old son, who has cerebral palsy.

Doctors have changed her medications eight times in the last nine months. As she told me Monday, "They don't make a pill for what I'm going through."

Nearly a month ago, Vaughn tried to commit suicide by swallowing 40 sleeping pills. After 24 hours in an emergency room, she stayed five days in a stress unit at Herrick Hospital in Tecumseh, where she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. With only \$400 a month from public assistance to pay the rent and other expenses, she was recently evicted from her apartment and moved in temporarily with a girlfriend in Britton, where I met her Monday.

"I was tired of the nightmares," she told me. "I was tired of the crying. I'm tired of people calling my son names. I'm tired of the governor and Legislature not doing what they said they were going to do."

"Nine months later, no one remembers what happened to him."

That's not quite true. Vaughn's Web page, <http://www.care2.com/c2c/group/RemoveRestraints>, helps maintain Souders as a national symbol of what's wrong with Michigan's prison and mental health systems. The family has hired Geoffrey Fieger's law firm and is suing 36 employees of the Department of Corrections and its private medical services contractor, Correctional Medical Services Inc., over Souders' death. Attorney Paul Broschay of Fieger's firm said the wrongful death lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in Detroit and could come to trial within two years.

A similar case, also handled by Fieger's firm, in the death by dehydration of another mentally ill inmate, 39-year-old Jeffrey Clark, brought in May a nearly \$3-million verdict against MDOC employees from a federal jury in Lansing.

"With the facts and circumstances surrounding Mr. Souders' case, we expect this verdict to be much higher," Broschay told me Tuesday.

Unfortunately, pressure like this is the only thing the state understands. While admitting mistakes in Souders' death and firing a nurse, it has not acknowledged a serious or

systematic problem with prison health care, despite compelling evidence contained in hundreds of pages of court documents.

Following a series I wrote last year, Gov. Granholm ordered an independent review of the system, which should wrap up next month. Incredibly, though, investigators have not interviewed the users of the system, prison inmates, which could cast doubts on any findings, if not discredit them altogether. MDOC has hired a consultant to work with its administrators to improve health care, but little will change until the state's shot-callers acknowledge the problem is serious.

And whatever happened to restoring the Legislature's Corrections Ombudsman Office to provide independent oversight of the system? Both Granholm and state Sen. Alan Cropsey of DeWitt, the Republican leader on prison issues, have told me they support restoring the ombudsman, but neither has the courage or commitment to act. So the idea appears dead. Meantime, the state continues to appeal orders by U.S. District Judge Richard Enslen that would help fix the system.

Still, Vaughn won't give up, and neither should anyone else who wants to clean up this mess. She sees a therapist and goes to group sessions once a week. She continues to work with prisoner advocacy groups such as Prison Legal Services of Michigan and the American Friends Service Committee. She plans to start a charitable foundation in Timothy's name.

The death of her son almost cost Vaughn her life, but it also gave her a voice. I hope someday soon the state will listen.

To see video of Timothy Souders last four days, go to www.aclu.org/prison/mentalhealth/28368res20070214.html.

JEFF GERRITT is a Free Press editorial writer. Contact him at

jgerritt@freepress.com or 313-222-6585.

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Cut spending first

Editorial

The replacement for the Single Business Tax (SBT) has apparently been agreed to, the budget for the 2007-2008 fiscal year patched together with a variety of one-term fixes and our state legislators have even agreed to shorten their vacations by a week to work on long-term issues.

What a difference a few weeks make.

Despite the apparent replacement of the SBT, it's hard to think that the State of Michigan is in any better place than it was at the beginning of the year. The SBT had to be replaced, after all, it was due to expire at the end of the year. Not much else has been done to solve the long-term problems we face here in Michigan, though The shell game legislators pulled off with shoring up the budget deficit won't fool any investors for long.

The least that legislators can do is to cut short their leisure time and work on something that will actually help pull us out of this mess, not just allow up to essentially limp along, paycheck to paycheck.

Let's start with long-term budget reform. Gov. Jennifer Granholm has indicated that she won't force state employees to give up their 5 percent salary increases as a way to help solve ongoing budget issues. She seems focused on attracting more revenue—in the form of a tax increase on residents. Members of the Republican-controlled Senate, though, say they won't even visit such an issue until the governor takes more steps to cut governmental costs—including the aforementioned salary freeze and more concessions on health care.

In that, we agree. We think it's unconscionable to ask taxpayers to pony up more of their own money if it will help increase governmental salaries. Most of us in the private sector do not have such guaranteed salaries; due to the economy, we're trying to make do on what we earned one, two or three years ago—when most of our other expenses have increased.

Residents would be more willing to live with an income tax increase if they see the legislators holding up their end by slimming down the government, reducing waste and cutting costs.

Until that happens, though, they're barking up the wrong tree.

<http://www.journalgroup.com/Opinion/5153/cut-spending-first>

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